Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council demands Iraq allow immediate unrestricted access to Special Commission to conduct investigations; calls on Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone to accept outcome of country's elections.

* Conclusion of comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty cannot be deferred any longer, Secretary-General tells Disarmament Conference.

* Traditional attitudes to family responsibilities could only be changed when double burden of women trying to manage public and private lives is recognized, expert panel tells Commission on Status of Women.

* UNCTAD and WTO to produce action-plan to increase Africa's export-oriented production and improvement of diversification and markets.

* UN launches $57 million appeal for humanitarian needs in Sierra Leone.

* All-inclusive Intra-east Timorese Dialogue opens in Austria.

* UN provides Electoral Assistance for Comoros in election process.

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The Security Council has demanded that Iraq allow immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to the Special Commission to carry out its investigations. In a Presidential statement today, the Council noted with growing concern that an inspection team was denied immediate and unconditional access to a site. Council President Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila of Botswana, said in the statement that the Council however noted access was only granted after unacceptable delays, and pointed out that such delays constitute clear violations of the provisions of the Council's resolutions.

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In a separate meeting today, the Security Council called on the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone to accept the outcome of the country's elections which ended last Friday. It has also urged the Front to enter into a full dialogue for peace. In a presidential statement, the Council welcomed the convening of the elections and congratulated the people on the courage and determination they showed in proceeding with the elections, despite difficulties and disruptions. The Council also stressed the importance it attached to a peaceful transition to civilian rule.

Council President Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila of Botswana, said the Council welcomed the commitment by the Chairman of the Provisional National Ruling Council to hand over authority by 31 March 1996 and called upon all concerned to cooperate fully with the newly-elected President and parliament. The Council was of the view that the circumstances created by the successful conclusion of the elections in Sierra Leone required redoubled efforts to end the fighting in that country.

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The conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty cannot be deferred any longer, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a statement today to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the Secretary-General stressed that the treaty must be concluded this year. Otherwise he said, a severe blow will be dealt to the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and thereby to peace and security as a whole.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali told the Conference on Disarmament that it was essential to overcome differences now, to bring to conclusion, over 30 years of efforts to ban all nuclear tests by international law, according to a UN Radio report from Geneva. There is no time to lose, the Secretary-General said, and the historic importance of these negotiations must not be underestimated. He called on all delegations whether they represented a large or small state, a state with nuclear weapons or one without, to show flexibility, open-mindedness, a spirit of compromise and a will to succeed. The international community clearly recognizes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are in the interest of all States, whether or not they have such weapons, he said.

Pointing out that the comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty would be an additional means of making the end of the cold war part of positive international law, the Secretary-General said it would also give new impetus to nuclear disarmament and make an invaluable contribution to the non-proliferation regime. It would also constitute an impediment to all qualitative development of nuclear weapons, the Secretary-General concluded.

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Traditional attitudes towards family responsibilities could only be changed when the double burden of women trying to manage their public and private lives was recognized, a panel of experts has told the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission was discussing child and dependent care and the sharing of family responsibilities.

According to the experts, women made more sacrifices for the family and much of their work was unpaid. The experts said women also worked longer hours in the work place, but men had not made commensurate efforts at home. The experts also spoke of the need to involve all family members, when attempting to change behaviour, including the young, adults and the elderly.

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The Executive Heads of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), have agreed to produce a plan of action for increasing Africa's export-oriented production and the improvement of

export diversification and markets. Noting that Africa represented only 2 per cent of world trade, UNCTAD said whereas for other developing countries, improved market access is a major instrument for stimulating economic growth, for Africa the first challenge is to diversify its production base and to build up value-added supply capacity.

Welcoming the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched yesterday, UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero said that unless supply capacities are strengthened, Africa runs the risk of being further marginalised in the world economy, because of the increasing premium which globalization and liberalization imposes on the efficient production of traded goods.

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The United Nations has appealed for $57 million over the next year to address the humanitarian needs in Sierra Leone that have resulted from five years of civil conflict. The inter-agency appeal for Sierra Leone, covering the period from March 1996 through February 1997, aims at meeting the emergency needs of the war-affected population, UN Spokesman Ahmad Fawzi said today.

Over the past five years, a cycle of violence has forced more than 2 million people to abandon their homes, he said. Resources are being sought by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to provide relief assistance and to support local communities in their efforts to address the crisis. The appeal launched by the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs also covers programmes in the areas of food aid and production, health and nutrition, non-food aid to displaced and war-affected populations, assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances, education, demobilization and coordination of humanitarian assistance. The Spokesman said it was critical for support to be forthcoming immediately so that aid could be supplied or provided during the current dry season.

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A meeting of the all-inclusive Intra-east Timorese Dialogue opened in Austria today. The meeting, the second of its kind, was agreed upon by the Secretary-General and the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal at their last round of talks on the question of East Timor, held in London this past January.

The 3-day meeting in Burg Schlaining does not represent a parallel negotiating track and will not address the political status of East Timor. It is a forum for continuing the free and informal exchange of views to explore ideas of a practical nature that might have a positive impact on the situation in East Timor and assist in the establishment of an atmosphere conducive to the achievement of a solution to the question of East Timor.

As on the previous occasion, the Secretary-General was asked to facilitate the follow-up meeting which is being attended by a United Nations observer. 30 East Timorese of all political opinions are participating in the meeting in their personal capacities.

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The UN Electoral Assistance Division has assisted the island nation of the Comoros in its election process which culminated in the presidential elections held

on 6th and 16th March. According to UN Spokesman Ahmad Fawzi, the Acting Director of the UN Electoral Assistance Division was in the Comoros to observe the elections and to coordinate the activities of the international observers for the first and second round of elections.

Both contenders - Mohammed Taki, the president-elect and his opponent Abbas Djoussof, said that for the first time since independence in 1975, the election of a president took place in a democratic, transparent and free atmosphere. They both expressed their appreciation to the United Nations and to the international community for assisting the electoral process and for the return of stability to that country.

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